

Persuasion Analysis

Using Hugh Rank's Intensify / Downplay Schema

Adapted from : Rank, H. (1976). *Teaching about Public Persuasion*, In Daniel Dietrich (ed.), *Teaching about Doublespeak*, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English http://changingminds.org/techniques/general/overall/rank_schema.htm

INTENSIFY

What is it?

The persuader/ author tries to increase the significance of elements of the message so that the reader/ viewer/ audience will take the message more seriously or see it as more important.

Repetition

Repeating a word or visual pattern so that it will be remembered and/ or accepted.

Look for/ listen for:

- repeated words, sounds, visual elements, patterns (through direct repetition or repetition of similar words, sounds, visual elements, patterns)

Association

Linking or connecting information in a text to something or someone that is desirable of something that is feared.

Look for/ listen for:

- ideas, words, visuals that might be symbolic of abstract ideas (e.g. a maple leaf to symbolize Canadian patriotism)
- use of allusions/ references to people/ events, media, popular culture, etc. with which the audience might be familiar
- appeals to emotions instead of logic

Composition

Organizing or constructing a message in order to have a specific impact. The message (what is desired) may be directly stated or implied or its opposite may be stated or implied.

Look for/Listen for:

- notice where words, visual elements, and ideas are placed in a message/ text
- things that are at the beginning of text or paragraphs and things that are at the end tend to be the ones that are emphasized for readers or viewers
- notice how much space the words, visual elements, and ideas take up

DOWNPLAY

What is it?

The persuader/ author tries to decrease attention on details or ideas so that the reader/ viewer/ audience see specific information as unimportant or not worth consideration.

Diversion

Distracting the reader, viewer, listener away from information which might be a required part of the message. This may be accomplished by reducing the audience's attention to a part of the overall message (e.g. an expiry date on a carton of juice)

Look for/ listen for:

- small or hidden text or visual element, or warnings at the end or embedded in a verbal message
- think about how the message would be different if the elements were moved, reduced, or expanded

Omission

Saying nothing about the things that go against a message or claim.

Look for/ Listen for:

- consider what is missing from the text or message
- consider points of view or interests that are not included or which make up a small percentage of the overall message.

Confusion

Creating uncertainty or misunderstanding around information the audience members may already believe or know. The message (what is desired) may be directly stated or implied or its opposite may be stated or implied.

Look for/ listen for:

- use of complex or obscure data
- words or visuals which ask questions or create uncertainty in the audience